

ABSTRACT

Two Versions of Christian Community: Roger Williams, John Cotton, and the Debate on Religious Tolerance

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Perceived as a "radical" and a "separatist," Roger Williams aggressively advocated religious tolerance among the Puritan community in seventeenth century New England. Eventually banished for his beliefs and the manner in which he pursued them, Williams wrote *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* in 1644 to refute religious intolerance in Puritan ideology, and in response to personal ideological confrontation with the Pastor John Cotton, whom Williams blamed for his banishment. Throughout *The Bloudy Tenent*, Williams uses violent language as well as religious rhetoric to evoke action in his readers, in the hope that appeals to emotion and spiritual ideals might alter Puritan ideology, as well as allow him to triumph over Cotton. Cotton, in turn, wrote his own tract in response to Williams. Representing the typical Puritan community, Cotton argues that the allowance of religious tolerance allows members of his community to stray from the religiously narrow path God created. Their writings pose two models of Christian community and two ways of thinking about the belief and freedom within community that remain with us today.

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TWO VERSIONS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY: ROGER WILLIAMS, JOHN
COTTON, AND THE DEBATE ON RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER ONE

Christian Communities in Early America

Leaving England in order to establish a new Christian community, the Puritans helped lay America's Christian foundation. By doing so, the Puritans gave a precedent for one facet of the "American dream": the complex relationship between church and state. In his collection of essays entitled *Puritan Influences in American Literature*, Emory Elliott states that "the notion of America's promise presents a contradiction: it seemed at once to guarantee social equality for all and to offer every individual the opportunity to achieve personal success surpassing his fellows" (xiii). The complexity of Emory's concept of "America's promise" runs through Puritan ideology. While contemporaries think America should create an equal playing field allowing everyone an opportunity to thrive and succeed, other Americans find the concept of equality a bit too altruistic. The duality seen in the newborn Puritan community was perfectly demonstrated by the renowned debate between Puritan pacifist and activist Roger Williams and his rival, New England pastor John Cotton. An advocate for religious equality and the separation of church and state, Roger Williams sought to make America everyman's country. Encouraging tolerance and the freedom to pursue and investigate various religious identities without any repercussions or consequences from the government, Williams campaigned for religious freedom. While Williams advocated tolerance, Cotton pursued personal interests as well as endorsed the unity of church and state, suggesting that the government should enforce certain religious practices and rituals of worship. Each man's rhetorical and writing style supports his understanding of the role

of Christian community. Williams advocated the separation of church and state so that every individual could have the freedom to pursue religious practices they deemed appropriate for their relationship with Christ. In contrast, Cotton argued for the integration of church and state so that his community could remain united in their walk with Christ, encouraging his flock to avoid separatism, a temptation that could potentially damn them to hell. While Williams sought justice and Cotton sought power, both provide examples of the two vying components within the newly founded Christian community and how that debate resurfaces today.

While the Puritan reverence in their relationship with God was undeniable, perhaps it is best to consider the reasons they believed so ardently in the divine power of God. The Puritans, loyal enough to cross an ocean into “uncivilized” land, lived their lives in hopes that everything they did would reflect and glorify God. Seen in their literature, the Puritan biblical language and individualized style provides further evidence of their allegiance to God. In his work entitled *A Puritan Church and Its Relation to Community, State and Nation*, Oscar Edward Maurer explains the vitally important role God played in the life of the Puritans:

The Puritans believed profoundly in the *Sovereignty of God*. They were profoundly pre-occupied with the fact of God. To the Puritan, God is the true and only King by divine right, and His sovereignty extends over all persons and events, from eternity to eternity. His will is the ground of all that exists. His glory is the object of the created universe. He is the sole source of good everywhere, and in obedience to Him alone are human society, or individual action, rightfully ordered. (191)

Such devout spirituality can be seen coursing throughout Williams’s *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*. Rooted in Puritan and Calvinistic theology,

Williams's writing reflects the Puritan need to see God's divine providence in every aspect of life. Writing *The Bloudy Tenent* to prove that God lives within every human being, Williams embodied this Puritan mentality. While John Cotton believed in God's absolute sovereignty as well, he also placed a considerable amount of faith in the government. Thinking that a united government and church would serve its constituency best, Cotton disagreed with Williams's claim that an intertwined church and government encouraged religious persecution. While both men devoutly followed God, they had very different interpretations of God's will, illustrating the different arguments represented in Puritan literature as well as the dual poles of equality and personal success coursing throughout early Christian community.

While establishing Christian community within America, the Puritan Biblical writing style and rhetoric left a fundamentally religious mark on American literature. Throughout their writing, the Puritans used the Bible as their map, following its advice and wisdom to create their own works of literature. In the preface to *Puritan Influences in American Literature*, Emory Elliott states that for the "Puritans, the biblical reference was the very jewel of their literature. A multifaceted verbal diamond which reflected various colors of meaning, the biblical reference stirred the imagination to discover its many complex associations" (xv). Sculpting their writings around the various sacred images emanating from the Bible, the Puritans created religious-based literature laden with unique themes and language. However, due to its use of allegory, complex concepts, and multifaceted parables, the Bible allows for countless interpretations as seen in its various translations and adaptations available today. Throughout Roger Williams and John Cotton's discourse, each roots his argument in biblical scripture. Interpreting and using

various scriptures differently, both men use their understanding of the Bible to argue their varying stances on issues such as religious tolerance and the unity or separation of church and state. Again providing an example of the complexity of early Christian community, both men stand by their arguments, ardently defending what they define as truth.

Presented with a truly unique opportunity, the American Puritans were able to create a new genre of literature. Planting literary seeds that would eventually blossom into a Biblically based facet of American literature, the American Puritans manipulated and molded words until they constructed a religiously structured language that reflected God in every facet of their lives. Using their religiously based language to glorify God, the Puritans experimented with words, applying them in ways they had never been used before. William J. Scheick explains this phenomenon, stating:

From the Puritan American writer's point of view, words are like the details of nature: expressions or signs replete with divine signification. These natural signs were considered to be as determined in definition as were biblical types... Nevertheless, in their Augustinian heritage Puritan American authors found authority to "play," if reverently and guardedly, with natural and verbal signs, and in the process... they indeed created art. (3)

Using the "divine signification" of words, the Puritans created a new literary style of writing intently focused on the Bible and God's manifestation of Himself throughout their daily routine (Scheick 3). Venerably "playing" with words, the Puritans created a new art form in order to better praise and worship God. Using words and reverent manipulation of language, the Puritans planted the unique, biblical seeds that would grow into one Biblically derived branch of America's individualized literature.

Essentially laying the religious foundation of America, the Puritans molded and sculpted biblical scripture into its own unique aesthetic. Applying the profound meaning of biblical scriptures and parables to their literature, the Puritans constructed their own

literary tradition from their reverent love of God. Emory Elliott describes how the Puritan influence has contributed to and molded literature today, stating that:

a better historical understanding of the Puritan vision which fostered so many persistent American themes and a more accurate evaluation of the Puritan literary aesthetic—suggest the advances in our methods of historical-literary analysis which have accompanied the renewed interest in the continuity between the Puritan and later American culture. (xv)

Understanding the fundamental importance of Puritan literature and its influence on American literature plays a crucial role in understanding American culture. Planting a unique facet of American literature and culture in biblically rich soil, the Puritans were America's first leaders. In her unique beginnings, we find the spiritual ancestry that established Christian community, a vital component of the "American dream." In further dissecting the "Puritan vision," scholars can truly explore the cornerstone of American culture, examining the impact of America's Puritan heritage on today's culture (Elliott xv). Molding and shaping the path American culture and literature would take, the Puritans birthed America's promise of equality and the potential for all to succeed.

Obsessively seeking divine providence in every aspect of their lives, the Puritans constructed their world around morality and religious practices. Williams, rooted in Calvinism, molded his writing style and his life around the Bible and Calvinistic theology. Throughout Williams's writing, evidence of Calvin's influence continually surfaces. In his essay entitled "Roger Williams and John Milton: The Calling of the Puritan Writer," O. Glade Hunsaker quotes Calvin, stating:

God hath not only sown in the minds of men seed of religion... but hath manifested himself in the formation of every part of the world and daily presents himself to public view, in such a manner, that they cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold him. (5)

Through Williams's ardent defense of religious tolerance, the reader immediately catches the Calvinistic undertones lying at the foundation of his argument. Evidence of Calvin's influence can be seen in various passages from Williams's *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*. Referring to the Divine Trinity, particularly Jesus, as omniscient, wise, and most importantly peaceful, Williams respects and worships the wonderment of God. Throughout his text Williams portrays the Prince of Peace by sharply contrasting to Him the heinousness of Cotton's argument, described through violent and gory language, imagery, and allegory. Through the structure of his writing, specifically the violent and melancholy discourse between Truth and Peace, Williams proves that God "manifests Himself... in such a manner, that they cannot open their eyes without being constrained to behold Him" (Calvin in Hunsaker 5). By advocating freedom of religious practices, Williams embraces his Calvinist roots while simultaneously demonstrating the dual personality of Christian community. Endorsing the guaranteed "social equality for all," Williams supports those seeking God and religion, endorsing the betterment of mankind (Elliott xiii).

Capitalizing on the potential for "personal success" of the newborn Christian community, John Cotton enjoyed his prominent position among influential Puritan clergy. Once an advocate for outspoken Separatist Anne Hutchinson, Cotton withdrew his support and even advocated her banishment once other well-known Puritan officials endorsed her ostracism from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. While Cotton played a crucial role in Williams's banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony as well, his focus remained on his role as a well-respected leader in the community, continually rising on the political and clerical scales. Despite their obvious differences, Cotton was thought

to be a shepherd of his community by most. Esteemed, Cotton was considered an authority in church leadership and was fortunate to have the majority of his community endorse his political and religious platforms. Cotton and Williams's personal mantras, firmly rooted in varying church and state ideologies, clashed in almost every sense. In his work entitled *Godly Letters*, Michael J. Colacurcio details Cotton's clerical career through his various works. In Cotton's *Christ the Fountain of Life*, Colacurcio describes him as "the Cotton who attracted followers from outside his own locale and inspired some of them to make an ocean crossing in his name" (332). Well respected and immersed in his role as a leader, Cotton became very influential in his community. Cotton also employs an "extended conceit of spiritual "life" which... is the cause of "motion," of "feeding," of "growth," "expulsion," and "propagation," hoping to inspire his community as well (Colacurcio 127-42). Deeply committed to "achieving personal success," Cotton also contributed to and highlighted the worldly and spiritual complexity of the early Christian community.

Despite their differences, both Roger Williams and John Cotton helped to establish America's early Christian community. More broadly, Puritans in general tailored their theology and literary style into what would eventually become the foundation of one Biblically based branch of American literature. In his preface, Emory Elliott states "Puritanism contained the seeds of political and social ideals, structures of thought and language, and literary themes which inspired both the content and the forms of much American writing from 1700 to present" (xii). Using the Bible as their compass, both men crusaded for what they thought would make America God's promise land. Planting their political and social seeds in biblical soil, the roots of Puritan writing

remained firmly lodged in religious parables and messages. Roger Williams and John Cotton's ideology burst through the surface of religious discussions and literature and delved into the deeper issues at hand. Discussing and debating the role of church and state as well as other interpretations of biblical scripture, John Cotton and Roger Williams revolutionized the style, content, and language used in Puritan literature.

In their argumentative discourse, John Cotton and Roger Williams developed the structure of their texts to reflect the urgency of their religious dispute. Personifying Truth and Peace in *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*, Williams creates a violent and disturbing correspondence between the estranged lovers. Longing to be reunited and to stop the murder of innocent people under Christ's name, Truth and Peace employ gory allegories and images to evoke an equally passionate response from the reader. While Cotton models the structure of his dialogue after Williams's, even naming his response *The Bloody Tenent Washed and Made White In the Blood of the Lamb*, Cotton's rebuttal seems lackluster in comparison. Passionately advocating pacifism and separatism, Williams, according to Hunsaker,

in the spark of goodness within each man, which allowed him to give political matters even to unregenerate men, traced to his belief that the Book of Nature provides all men everywhere with the minimum guidance necessary for responsible moral behavior. (7)

Hoping that his argument would persuade his adversaries, Williams sought to revolutionize the government by separating church and state. Williams asked his Puritan compatriots to embrace the selflessness advocated and embodied by Christ Himself. While Cotton defended himself and the opinions of his community, both men defended their ideologies in hopes of advancing their newly-founded Christian community.

Referred to as a "sound," even "conventional Calvinist," Williams blended his

well-rooted Calvinistic background with Puritan theology (Davis 17). Considering “themselves first and foremost adherents to the Scriptures,” the Puritans kept biblical scripture at the core of their writing (Davis 17). Allowing a culmination of theologians to foster the growth of their spirituality, the Puritans appreciated growth and meditation on the scriptures, but relied on the Bible as their ultimate source of truth. While Williams amalgamated both Puritan and Calvinistic theology, he also created a theology of his own. Described as a “Puritan, and a rather orthodox and extreme one at that,” Williams was said to have a “theological stringency that sometimes made John Cotton and the Massachusetts Bay Colony establishment look like capitulating religious liberals” (Davis xi). Disturbed by the Massachusetts Bay Colony’s inability to realize the persecution ensued from a government enforced religious system, Williams created his own radical theology which inspired his writing of *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* as well as countless other writings. Williams found his purpose in working to abolish religious persecution and advocate a religiously equal society. Embracing and fighting for his interpretation of Christian community, Roger Williams creates his own theology in hopes of gaining “social equality” as well as religious equality for everyone (Elliott xiii).

Appearing as a somewhat prophetic figure, Williams allows his own interpretations of the Bible to inspire and validate his pursuit for religious tolerance. Attempting to embody Christ’s life, Williams justifies his theology with biblical scriptures. In a biography of Williams, Perry Miller addresses Williams’s understanding of biblical scriptures, stating that

Williams was so intense a Biblicist that he made little use... of secondary sources of the works of the Fathers, or of Protestant theologians. He simply presented his

own reading of the Testaments, whether out of cunning or bland innocence. (14)

Allowing little to influence his interpretation of the scriptures, Williams completely immersed himself in the pursuit and actualization of his own theology. Grounded in the scriptures along with an amalgamation of Calvinistic and Puritan ideology, William's own theology appears throughout each of his writings. Consumed with abolishing religious persecution, Williams endures repeated rejection and banishment in hopes of impacting the Massachusetts Bay colony with his radical and individualized concept of the roles of the government and church. Revolutionary for his time, Williams's hopes for America would eventually come to pass. His visionary ideology provides further evidence of the literary and cultural seeds planted by the Puritans. Coming to fruition, Williams's ideal eventually becomes actualized, allowing America to truly call itself a land of equal opportunity.

While Williams's passion bursts through each of his texts, John Cotton took a more logical approach in his writings. Concerned with the logistics of governing, Cotton becomes preoccupied with the practicality of the unity of church and state rather than evangelization. While Cotton ardently defends himself against Williams's accusations in *The Bloody Tenent*, his writing seems a bit drab in comparison to Williams's sanguine tinged pages. Despite his lack of passionate rhetoric, Cotton played a critical role in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The majority of his community, obviously excluding Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson, respected his authority and his opinions. Described as "a typical Puritan minister, illustrative alike, in his virtues and his defects," Cotton was considered an asset to his community and a leader of New England (Walker 94). Williston Walker describes Cotton as learning "zeal, moral earnestness, spirituality,

breadth of interest in Church and State, yet narrowness of sympathy and intolerance, of the strength and failings of the remarkable race of men that founded New England” (94). While he did not believe that government and church affairs presented an appropriate venue for democracy, Cotton played an integral role in the establishment of Christian community. Not only did he work to inspire respect for authority throughout his community, but he also embraced the idea of the individual’s ability to achieve success. Simultaneously embracing community and individuality, Cotton’s logical thought processes made him an invaluable asset to his community, despite his “narrowness of sympathy and intolerance” (94).

Cotton’s logical and unsympathetic response to *The Bloody Tenent* pales in comparison to the emotionally charged rhetoric employed by Williams. Hoping to ignite an incensed spark within his reader, Williams illustrates the religious turmoil of the world through brutally violent imagery and sanguine allegories. In contrast, Cotton’s logical approach evokes the reader’s sense of reason, explaining why the church and state should remain together. Unlike Williams who remains passionately devoted to abolishing religious prejudice, Cotton seems to side with the majority. In the case of Anne Hutchinson, Cotton ardently defended her at first only to revoke his support and advocate her banishment. While Cotton may have been a well-respected leader in the New England community, his focus remained primarily on enforcing the union of church and state rather than exploring Williams’s revolutionary idea of Christian community. Illustrating the pursuance of personal success in hopes of surpassing one’s fellows, Cotton demonstrates how this aspect of Christian community can profoundly impact the lives of others.

Consumed with his unique theology's perspective on Christianity, Williams sought to make America a safe haven for those of all religious beliefs. Williams devoted his life to the crusade for religious equality, viewing the world from his separate and individualized looking glass. Williams intended to prove that Christianity could be accepting, all encompassing, and pure, hoping that America would become the new promise-land. Williams wanted New England to understand the weight of religious persecution, defining "Christian behavior" very differently than John Cotton. Fully disclosing every angle of his argument in *The Bloody Tenent*, Williams's mantra becomes his pacifistic campaign to create and breed tolerance in America. In his work entitled *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America*, Edwin S. Gaustad addresses Williams's unique perception of Christianity, stating: "He wanted Boston and New England to be not another trite example of Christendom but a sparkling new manifestation of genuine Christianity: thirsting only after righteousness, not after political patronage or power" (31). Throughout Williams's writings, the reader immediately identifies the Each page becomes immersed in a passionate plea for tolerance, begging the reader to invest in Williams's cause to end the violent and horrific nature of religious persecution. Banished and rejected for his beliefs, Williams enacted the Puritan aspects of his own theology in standing by his beliefs despite the consequences.

Williams's and Cotton's distinct understandings of Christian community can be taken as defined by the rejection or embrace of success or power. Cotton and Williams's main quarrel lay in their different understanding of the Bible's stance on the role of church and state. While Williams understands that the unity of church and state has led to the brutal slaughter of human beings that could have potentially converted to Christianity,

Cotton sees that the unity of church and state allows for complete authority over the people. Evidence of Cotton's understanding of the purpose of church and state is seen in his ability to banish people from their community. Summarizing Perry Miller's sentiment, Jesper Rosenmeier addresses Cotton's banishment of Williams in his essay entitled "The Teacher and the Witness: John Cotton and Roger Williams," stating "Cotton's banishment of Williams serves as a dramatic illustration of the ever-new paradox that a society which calls itself Christian often will persecute and crucify the very men and women who most profoundly imitate Christ's love, humility, and patience" (408). Portraying Williams as a prophetic figure, Miller addresses Williams's Christ-like suffering in hopes that the rest of his community will soon realize the injustice of religious persecution. Williams passionately hated violence, employing only a "spiritual sword" in his literary writings. Imitating Christ in his attempt to disciple the rest of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Williams essentially surrendered his life to the betterment of the New England community and the future of the Christian community.

The divide between Williams and Cotton provides the perfect illustration of the complexity of Christian community, but it also indicates the danger in this intricacy. While Williams selflessly advocates for the religious equality of all people, Cotton sides with the majority of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, simultaneously granting complete power over the people. In his essay entitled "John Cotton and Roger Williams debate Toleration 1644-1652," Henry Bamford Parkes details the differences between Cotton and Williams, expressing the complicated dichotomy of the early Christian community. Establishing Cotton as a renowned "spiritual leader," Parkes grants him the respect he earned among his community while simultaneously questioning his conceptualization of

Christianity. Parkes rightly states that

The debate gives the modern reader an excellent illustration of the workings of the Puritan mind. Cotton and Williams, equal in sincerity but at the poles in their interpretations of religious experience, compromised between them the whole of Puritanism. (736)

Cotton and Williams's views were so radically different that Williams's banishment seemed the only way the two could coexist. Indicating the importance of the Williams-Cotton debate, Parkes addresses how this conflict envelops the whole of Puritan ideology and even the religious and political course of America. While Christian community has the ability to substantially improve one's quality of life, it also provides an opportunity for one to be exploited. Depicting this juxtaposition within the early Christian community, both Williams and Cotton actively pursued their own interpretation.

Inspired by Christ's sacrifice for mankind and God's eternal mercy, Williams considered it his mission to campaign for religious equality in New England. Provoked by divine providence and the God within him, Williams threw himself into the campaign for religious tolerance whole-heartedly. W. Clark Gilpin explores Williams's inspiration for devoting himself so completely to abolishing religious persecution, stating that Williams was motivated not by "Parliament, not the clergy, but the individual preacher, illuminated by the clergy, but the individual preacher, illuminated by the spirit and willing to suffer for his convictions, was the agent of reformation in these latter days of the world" (64). Continuing, Gilpin explains, "Roger Williams shared these convictions and counted himself among those called to this spiritual vocation" (94). Gilpin, committing himself so completely to this crusade, dubs Williams's devotion to religious tolerance as his "vocation." So consumed with his passionate obligation to rid the world of religious prejudice, Williams creates a unique "vocation" for himself, one he (and

others) has seen divinely sanctioned by God. Prepared to suffer and eventually face banishment for his radical beliefs, Williams dedicates his life to a cause bigger than himself, successfully advocating his understanding of Christian community.

In his essay entitled “The Teacher and the Witness: John Cotton and Roger Williams,” Rosenmeier continues to discuss the many differences between Williams and Cotton, stating “Where Williams has received respect and admiration, Cotton has been treated at best with condescension, at worst with scorn” (409). While Cotton may have been in a position of power and considered a well-respected leader in his time, his legacy leaves a different impression. Swayed by the opinion of the majority and following the path with the most benefits and opportunities for promotion within his community, Cotton took advantage of those such as Williams and Anne Hutchinson. Detailing the countless differences between Williams and Cotton, Rosenmeier continues, stating, “His belief in the magistrate’s right and duty to uphold the established religious order with the power of the sword has been regarded as a confusion of Christian values, and his personal motives in Williams’s banishment from Massachusetts have been questioned” (409). A direct violation of Christ’s lifestyle as well as Williams’s pacifistic manifesto, Cotton’s focus on the relationship between church and state may have hindered, these critics suggest, his perception of the scripture. While Williams devotes himself solely to embodying the life of Christ as well as illustrating the religiously intolerant violence of murders committed in Christ’s name, Cotton seems to focus solely on the unity of church and state as well as his idea of promoting Christian community among New England, providing further evidence of the complexity of early Christian community.

Both Roger Williams and John Cotton, “equal in sincerity but at the poles in their

interpretations of religious experience,” advocate the two different components comprising the intricacy of early Christian community (Parkes 736). While Williams’s dedication to abolishing New England of religious prejudice becomes his “vocation,” Cotton pursues the individualized component of the “American dream,” working to “achieve personal success surpassing his fellows” as well as advocating his understanding of the role of Christian community (Elliott xiii). Engaging in a passionate and fiery debate, both Williams and Cotton work to impress their point upon the minds of the people of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. While Williams’s passion ultimately results in his banishment, his Christ-like suffering establishes him, for later readers, as a prophetic figure dedicated to eradicating religious intolerance. Cotton, taking the side of the majority, plays a vital role in Williams’s banishment in hopes of promoting his interpretation of the role of Christian community. Allowing the reader a glimpse into and all encompassing glimpse of the “Puritan mind,” this debate proves the vitality of the Puritans to their unique branch of American literature and culture. Deeply rooted in their relationship with God, the Puritans planted seeds of religious importance, pioneering the structure and content of American religious and social thought. Roger Williams’s dream for America eventually became a reality. Achieving “personal success” by attaining respect from his community, Cotton became one of the most prominent leaders of New England and a spiritual governor of the Puritans.

CHAPTER TWO

The Violent Language of Community in Williams's *The Bloody Tenent*

Committed to developing America's newborn Christian community into a religiously tolerant one, Williams employed violent language to emphasize the treachery in religious persecution. The narrow-mindedness of Puritan thought against which Williams argued was a crucial context for the development of his own philosophy. Joshua Miller states that the Puritan "theology was profoundly political, and their religious thought was infused with such political concepts as power, participation, and autonomy" (58). Throughout his correspondence with Puritan ministers and government officials, Williams too expresses his opinion of the political nature of Puritan thought. From Williams' perspective, John Cotton enjoyed the power of his position as a minister more than his actual duties to his congregation. Throughout *The Bloody Tenent*, Williams sees Cotton as the perpetrator preventing the reunion of Truth and Peace, the estranged lovers who criticize the ignorance of religious tolerance. Consumed with the "power, participation and autonomy" of the Puritan religious and political ideology, Cotton primarily focused on upholding the established religious and governmental laws rather than exploring Williams's radical concept of religious tolerance (Miller 58). As well as disagreeing with traditional Puritan ideology, Williams uses violent and religious language to illustrate the power of his message. Hoping that the powerful language he employs coupled with his passionate rhetoric would evoke a change in traditional Puritan ideology, Williams sought to encompass traditional Puritan thought as well as redefine it.

Born into a Calvinistic family in Smithfield England, Williams converted to Puritanism at a young age. As an apprentice of Sir Edward Coke, “the premier Jurist in seventeenth-century England,” Williams learned much about aggressive rhetoric and writing, which can be seen throughout *The Bloudy Tenent* (Davis 4). In 1630, Williams set sail for the Americas with his wife, Mary Williams, and a group of other Puritans to charter the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Due to his charismatic preaching style and the passion in his messages, Williams was offered a position at the Boston church, “the most prominent church in the colony” (Davis 7). Rejecting the Boston church’s offer because they had yet to renounce the Church of England, Williams was branded as a “separatist,” essentially condemning himself to societal rejection. After continually voicing his “separatist” ideology, religious toleration, Williams was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Sent back to England to receive sentencing, Williams managed to make it back to the Americas again, seemingly unscathed but consumed with changing the minds of those who disagreed with him, especially those he thought to be involved in his banishment.

Because Williams considered John Cotton to be the most outspoken advocate in his banishment, as well as the pinnacle of erred Puritan ideology, Williams wrote *The Bloudy Tenent* explicitly to refute Cotton’s beliefs. Just as Williams was firmly rooted in religious toleration, pacifism, and the separation of church and state, Cotton was equally grounded in the unity of church and state. Convinced that the two were “cooperating powers,” Cotton believed “the state protected the church from disturbance, while the church selected the leaders of the state from among its members” (Emerson 136). While Cotton claimed that he had nothing to do with Williams’s banishment, surmising that

Williams banished himself for his radical ideology, Williams thought differently. Written for the explicit purpose of proving John Cotton wrong, *The Bloudy Tenent* perfectly captures Williams's passion for religious tolerance. The initial tone of the first chapter of Williams's *The Bloudy Tenent* establishes Cotton as a violent and ignorant figure more concerned with the rightness of his ideology than the well-being of his community.

Puritans valued "participation" in their society. William was considered a nuisance and banished because he refused to participate with the rest of his community. As Miller writes, "both towns and churches claimed the right to exclude those who they believed were morally unfit for membership," banishment indicates that his morals did not meet the Massachusetts Bay Colony's criteria (58). Because town and church were so intimately intertwined, there was hardly a distinction between the two. Violating the "power, participation and autonomy" of the Puritan ideology of the Massachusetts Bay colony, Williams's banishment was almost a certainty (Miller 58). Advocating foreign, radical ideas, Williams was essentially alone in his beliefs and was therefore easy to dismiss as a rebel. The "power, participation and autonomy" of Puritan religious and political ideology and the intimate relationship between the church and the government was the source of Williams's contention with the new colonies in the Americas (Miller 58). Williams was disappointed to find the religious state of the Americas so similar to what he left in England. The difference between Williams's definition of religious tolerance and the Puritans' definition seems to be Williams's main source of conflict and his biggest concern with the Puritans' ideology. While the Puritans defined religious tolerance as freedom from persecution of one religion unified with the government, Williams defined religious tolerance as worship in the way he or she chooses.

Determined to eliminate religious prejudices in the Americas, Williams devoted his life to a change that would better himself and his understanding of Christian community.

Throughout Williams's writings, the contrast between violent language and tenderly reverent language propels his argument evoking action. As seen throughout his correspondence with John Cotton and his interaction with Puritan ideology in general, Williams interpreted religious tolerance and one's role in Christian community differently. Piety played a defining role in the Williams's lifestyle as well as the Puritan lifestyle. However, one's right to religious practices served as a major source of contention between Williams and the Puritans. In his essay "Types of Puritan Piety," Jerald C. Brauer states:

Piety as understood by the Puritans was a person's essential religiousness which underlies all religious obedience, actions, and virtues. It was the source for the way one worshipped, for the style and content of one's actions—both private and public. It was the ground from which group life emerged and embodied itself, and it was the fundamental experience that one sought to explore through rational categories. Piety was the root of everything for the Puritan. (14)

While most Puritans felt that piety was best embodied through uniform religious practices and worship, Williams disagreed. Because piety was "the source for the way one worshipped" and determined "the style and content of one's actions," the differences between traditional Puritan ideology and Williams' ideology immediately established conflict (Brauer 39). Both parties were equally passionate about their own understanding of piety, whose underlying concerns still wage today. Williams, representing his own religiously tolerant ideology, and Cotton, representing traditional Puritan ideology, both felt that their own ideas were "the root of everything for the Puritan" (Brauer 39). While Cotton may have served as a better representative of Puritan thought and practices at the time, Williams wanted to encompass Cotton's ideology as well as incorporate religious

tolerance. Hoping to unite these ideologies, Williams expressed his version of piety as aggressively as the Puritans. Eventually resulting in his banishment, Williams continued to advocate his version of piety: religious tolerance.

Just as the concept of 'piety' had different implications to Williams and the Puritans, so did the concept of Christian community. Community also played a defining role in the Puritan lifestyle. While Williams valued community, he valued religious tolerance more. E. Brooks Holifield explains the importance of community to Puritan culture, stating that congregations were intended to "create communities of harmony and peace, and the means of achieving that end was to promote appropriate ritual" (551). Essentially splintering from the Puritan community, Williams became known as a "separatist" for his beliefs. Causing conflict within his community, Williams's separatist views were not well received. As well as his aggressiveness in advocating religious diversity, Williams's environment did not foster the growth of his radical ideas. While his ideology would lay the foundation of the American government, Williams caused conflict within his tight knit community, deafening government and religious officials. Consumed with their own definitions and concepts of piety and Christian community, Williams's community rejected him as well as his ideas. In his struggle to convince government and religious officials as well as his community of the soundness of his argument, Williams's banishment did not bode well for the acceptance of his ideology. Fighting for the justice of diverse religious practices regardless of the consequences, Williams created a new community, which paved the way for modern American government as well as religious freedom.

Throughout Williams' writings the reoccurring theme "freedom of consciousness"

surfaces, directly correlating with religious tolerance. While Williams himself did not use this term in his writing, “freedom of conscience” plays a defining role in his writing and his life’s work. While advocating religious tolerance, Williams still thought that all denominations were *not* equal. A forward thinker for his day, Williams’ outlook was not as “modern” as some might think. While Williams did not believe in the equality of all religious denominations he still argued that every denomination and religion should have the right to worship freely, without the fear of persecution or banishment. While Williams employed violent rhetoric to express his tolerant beliefs, he embodied his ideology by practicing extreme pacifism. Perfectly expressed in the Preface of *The Bloody Tenent*, Williams details Cotton’s many offenses:

That the blood of so many hundred thousand souls of Protestants and Papists split in the wars of present and former ages for their respective consciences, is not required not accepted by Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. (3)

Intentionally referring to Jesus as “The Prince of Peace,” Williams condemns those who spilt innocent blood in “Jesus’ name.” This first declaration lays the foundation of one’s understanding of Williams’s intention and definition of “freedom of conscience.”

Williams firmly believed that one cannot be a true follower of Christ without abolishing religious oppression.

Employing language to fight his battles, Williams’ separatist ideologies called for a radical change in the Puritan mindset. Williams argued that a government tied to a singular religion would result only in persecution, arguing with anyone who thought differently. Supporters of the unity of church and state, such as John Cotton, found themselves engaged in public debate with Williams. Writing *The Bloody Tenent* to disprove Cotton, Williams thought his argument impenetrable and sought to embarrass

anyone who felt differently. Intending to evoke a radical change among the Puritan community, Williams pursued a radical course of action. Using *The Bloudy Tenent* as his mantra, Williams used violent language and the Bible to support his religiously tolerant claims.

While Cotton modeled his religious and political beliefs after the Church of England, Williams based his religious and political ideology on Christ's lifestyle. Williams sought to remind New England pastors that Jesus' "death on the cross was the voice of God in eloquent terms, telling us that all men were equal sharers in his life and entitled to equal opportunities and privileges in the world which he had made for man's well-being" (Strickland xii). Constantly surrounded by the outcasts of society, Christ accepted everyone who sought Him, no matter their religious orientation. By reiterating and attempting to embody Christ's behavior, Williams was determined to remind the government and the church that served as an abomination to Christ's testament of acceptance. With Christ's sacrifice in mind, Williams saw himself as something of a prophetic figure, repeatedly reminding society that everyone deserved to worship Christ freely.

Throughout *The Bloudy Tenent*, Williams refutes each aspect of Cotton's argument. Despite the powerful employment of language and imagery, the reader is constantly reminded that *The Bloudy Tenent* was conceived in the wake of Cotton's determination to "prove persecution" (33). Throughout the rest of the work, Williams continually builds his evidence against Cotton, in hopes that the weight of this collective evidence would eventually break Cotton's resolve, finding him "guilty of all the blood of the souls crying for vengeance under the altar" (Williams 3). After engaging in a

vigorous debate with Williams, Cotton later published a literary work entitled, “The Beauty of Religious Constraint.” In this work, Cotton states:

It as a great advancement to the beauty and comeliness of a church [and] state, when people and magistrates do both consent together to purge the whole country, even to the utmost borders of the churches, from the corruption in religion, and to adorn the same with exemplary justice upon notorious offenders (quod. in Semonche 23).

The impasse created by the absolute foundation of each man in his respective beliefs fuels the fiery imagery of Williams’s *Bloudy Tenent*. Despite the sincerity of his intentions, irony continually manifests itself throughout Williams’s debates and literary works. Williams and Cotton fight absolutism with absolutism. *The Bloudy Tenent* voices Williams’s opinions and channels his anger and resentment. Whether or not John Cotton played a role in Williams’s banishment, Cotton was the main victim of Williams’ wrath, enduring the embarrassment of having their correspondence published without his knowledge. While this angry letter may have been unwarranted, Williams’ letters to Cotton serve as one of America’s first and greatest documents concerning civil liberties.

From the beginning, Williams establishes his purpose in writing *The Bloudy Tenent*: to emulate Christ’s behavior regarding religious toleration. As a “separatist” in New England, Williams serves as an example of the oppressed that he defends throughout *The Bloudy Tenent*. Because he was banished and rejected, Williams felt the brutality and prejudices of society. Hoping to arouse change among those who banished him as well as the rest of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Williams devoted his life to the advancement of others’ religious rights. Despite his pacifism, Williams uses particularly violent language to portray the horrendous nature of the sins committed by those who advocate religious oppression. Because Williams felt that pacifism and religious

tolerance were the only ways to emulate Christ, he was particularly disturbed by those that were murdered or physically harmed under Christ's name. An abominable crime against God and one's fellow man, violence in the name of Christ undermines the essence of Christianity, demolishing any semblance of Christian community.

Throughout *The Bloody Tenent*, Williams personifies Truth and Peace, estranged lovers, using them to express why religious persecution and the unity of church and state harm humanity rather than help it. In Williams's text, the unity of church and state and religious oppression go hand in hand. While Williams establishes and continually reinforces the violent and prejudicial nature of religious persecution, he associates the same barbarism with the unity of church and state. The unification of church and state serves as a form of religious oppression committed by the government and the church. Already a radical, Williams hated any form of government that intended to marry itself to the church. Similarly, by using Truth and Peace as the only two characters throughout *The Bloody Tenent*, Williams establishes that these two ideals should be universal, just as religious toleration should be universal. Associating Truth and Peace with fundamental ideals embodied and used by Christ, Williams found truth and peace defining criteria in a Christian setting as well as a universal one. Modeling his life after Christ, Williams considered a violation of these ideals a direct defiance of Christ.

Despite his extreme pacifism, Williams employs violent language to depict religious oppression and the unity of church and state. In the first section of *The Bloody Tenent* entitled "In a Conference between Truth and Peace," the dialogue between Truth and Peace seems especially despondent and filled with longing. Beginning the first chapter by asking "In what *darke corner* of the World (Sweet Peace) are *we two* meet?,"

Williams establishes the unnatural separation of the two (56). Just as religious tolerance and the separation of church and state go hand in hand, so do Truth and Peace.

Throughout the first chapter, Williams uses the separation of Truth and Peace as well as the melancholy tone of their conversation to demonstrate the incongruity of the unity of church and state. Much as isolating Truth and Peace from one another violates their natural desire to be together, the religious oppression of various faiths and practices violates man's innate desire to worship God.

Establishing the foreignness of both of these estrangements, Williams's language grows increasingly more violent as the *The Bloody Tenent* progresses. In the second chapter, Truth graphically describes the perils of the "one hundred forty four thousand *Virgins*" who were "forc'd and ravisht by *Emperours, Kings, and Governours* to their beds of *worship* and *Religion*" (60). By using progressively violent language, Williams passively describes the violence of religious oppression. Equating religious oppression to rape, Williams' explicit language paints a disturbing and horrific picture of religious oppression. The "Emperors, Kings, and Governors" Truth describes are not only forcing these people into submission, they are committing criminal offences against powerless people. Through Truth and Peace, Williams states that religious oppression violates human rights in every possible way.

Further addressing the issue of violence against those of various religious traditions, Truth begs to know "who can sit still and hear, these cries of murdered virgins? Who can but run, with zeal inflamed, to prevent the deflowering of chaste souls, and spilling of the blood of the innocent?" (Rev. 14) (31). By comparing the spiritual chastity of those who adopt other religious beliefs to a virgin, Truth equates the violation

of this chastity, religious persecution, to rape. By creating such graphic and sadistic imagery, Williams aims to arouse a need for justice in the reader, intending to evoke guilt and shame in those who do not agree. Realizing that using imagery as violent and heinous as rape was the only way to successfully conjure the horrific nature of religious oppression, Williams continues to use violent imagery throughout the rest of *The Bloudy Tenent*. The language used in this passage not only speaks to the criminal offences committed against those people not in power, but it also identifies government officials as the perpetrators. Created to help its constituents, the government should see the error in its ways, according to Williams. However, in this instance, the government advocates the exact opposite. Convinced that government officials, as well as some of the clergy, advocate the unity of church and state for control over their constituents, Williams calls for a radical change by using graphic language to convey the grotesqueness of the unity of church and state.

Throughout *The Bloudy Tenent* Williams establishes several parallel relationships through Truth and Peace. Just as Truth and Peace are estranged lovers, the partners of these relationships remain separated as well. Each of these underlying relationships manifests themselves through Williams's violent language and reoccurring themes of oppression and isolation throughout Truth and Peace's dialogue. As seen in the subtext of Truth and Peace's correspondence, "freedom of conscience" and pacifism reveal themselves to be in a similar relationship. In Williams's view one is essentially eliminating any religious injustices, allowing each individual to come to his or her own conclusions concerning religion. Just as Williams' establishes himself as a pacifist, condemning those who murdered "non Christians" in Christ's name and intentionally

refers to Jesus as the “Prince of Peace,” in Williams’ vision of progress, the union of “freedom of conscience” and pacifism indicates the progress of religious toleration, allowing individuals to think for themselves rather than acting violently.

The relationship between the government officials and the clergy reoccurs throughout the text as well. Both church and government officials value the illusion of a successful government and religious system modeled after England, rather than working to create a better one. Throughout his work, Williams continually reiterates his hatred of the unity of church and state. Convinced that these officials are consumed and driven by their desire for power, Williams repeatedly depicts their acts as criminal ones. So consumed with his passion for religious tolerance, Williams fails to moderate the abrasiveness of his approach. Convinced that *he* is correct, Williams argues as forcefully as the government officials and clergy. However, Williams’s characterization of the “Emperors, Kings, and Governors” allows him to establish himself as the prophetic figure who intends to free those enslaved by religious oppression. Using these characterizations and similar language throughout his work to depict the perpetrators and the victims, Williams uses his prophetic stance to continually assure the reader that his ideology embodies Christ.

Despite the chaos caused by these severed relationships, the solution is readily available; eliminating religious oppression unites each couple and restores peace and focus among the community. Throughout *The Bloody Tenent*, violent language and relationships are the agents of Williams’s message. However, they are also the vehicles of his consuming passion concerning religious oppression. Williams appeals to his readers’ pathos in hopes that they will feel as passionately about religious prejudice as he

does. Williams invites the reader to associate the zeal of the message with the “criminal offenses” committed by government officials and even the clergy. By writing in this manner and using barbaric language and imagery, Williams begs his reader to see the error in his ways. It is through his language that Williams assembles an army of pacifists that anticipates defending the victims of religious oppression.

While Williams employs violent language and imagery to portray the wretchedness of those who advocate religious prejudice, he also uses graphic language to enlist his pacifist army and defend the purity of his argument. Intent on combating his antagonist with a force equally as strong, Williams calls upon “*Piety and Christianity*” to “awaken the *Sons of God* to draw the *Spiritual Sword* (the Word of God) to preserve the *chastity and life of Spiritual Virgins*” (60). In this passage, Williams intentionally compares spiritual warfare to physical warfare. Clearly separating spiritual warfare from physical warfare, Williams questions the government and the churches confusion of the two. Often going to war in Christ’s name, countless “lost souls” died because they did not follow the same spiritual beliefs as their murderers. As an ardent pacifist, Williams uses the Bible as his weapon. Williams defined pacifism as engaging in verbal combat rather than physical altercations when debating religious differences. Williams applied his definition of pacifism specifically to his religious beliefs, following Christ’s example. Convinced that the only war should be spiritual warfare, Williams draws his “Spiritual Sword” to “fight” for his cause. Just as Williams allows the violent language he uses fight his battles, he also uses the Bible to engage in spiritual warfare. Just as Jesus—Williams’s own model pacifist--allowed the Word of God to fight his battles, Williams employs the same method for spiritual warfare. Because language and his oratorical skills

are the only weapons he uses versus the political power Cotton yields, the importance of rhetoric is considerably heightened. Just as Williams depends solely on language, so do Truth and Peace. Relying on Christ as his defense, Williams dresses himself in the armor of Christ and the Word of God to fight for religious freedom.

Discussing their separation, the mournful tone of Truth and Peace's conversation exposes the despondent and violent nature of a world without religious tolerance. The desperation of their discourse suggests that religious affairs have been oppressive for quite some time. Placing their faith and hope in God for a better future, Truth tells Peace that they "must hope, and wait, and bear the fury of the dragon's wrath, whose monstrous lies and furies shall with himself be cast into the lake of fire, the second death" (Rev. 20 [10, 14]) (28). Equating the current state of religious and government affairs to the "fury of the dragon's wrath," Truth sets a pacifistic example for the rest of society (28). While others participate in the "monstrous lies and furies" of Satan, Truth and Peace emulate the pacifistic example of Christ, hoping others will follow His example as well (28). Questioning their existence as well as their inability to be together, Truth and Peace wonder how they can survive the "dungeons of darkness" controlled and manipulated by ignorant government officials. Initially, the language of the first chapter indicates the yearning of estranged lovers. Progressing further, Williams then describes the "monstrous lies and furies" of Cotton and his followers, finally returning to the nostalgic yearning of Truth and Peace. Indicating that the road to religious toleration and the separation of church and state will be paved with obstacles and hypocrites, Williams prepares the reader for his own vindication and the journey described in *The Bloody Tenent*. As previously mentioned, relationships and the separation of the partners of these

relationships play a vital role throughout *The Bloody Tenent*. Continually emphasizing the separation between partners, the reader wonders how long these relationships can remain functional while the partners remain separate. As seen in the frustrating nature of Truth and Peace's relationship, religious oppression creates a wall between God and his people. Evident through the change in the tone of their language, the correspondence between Truth and Peace allows the reader a glimpse into the gradual decline of society, religion, and spirituality without the elimination of religious oppression. Despite their initial romantic language, Truth and Peace grow angrier and more frustrated as *The Bloody Tenent* continues. Originally languished and gloomy, Truth and Peace become increasingly more aware of the hypocritical and barbaric nature of their plight due to the ineptitude of those fostering "the flames of devouring wars that leave neither spiritual nor civil state, but burn up branch and root" (Williams 30). Blatantly describing the turmoil that can only be experienced in war, Truth and Peace describe the tumult of horror and violence caused by those who advocate the unity of church and state. The downward progression of Truth and Peace's relationship indicates that with the unity of church and state automatically comes religious persecution. Truth and Peace's correspondence evoke fiery imagery, indicating the hell that the hypocrites impose upon those who are not religiously congruent with their beliefs.

Williams' use of language throughout *The Bloody Tenent* translates the violent nature of his message to his audience. Throughout Williams' writings, the reader can see the obvious discrepancies between Williams' definition of certain concepts versus the Puritans understanding. The main source of contention between Williams and the Puritans lie in their inability to compromise and communicate with one another. Hoping

to radically alter the Puritan mindset, Williams aggressively advocated his beliefs, ultimately resulting in his banishment. Constantly surfacing in his correspondence with John Cotton and his writings, Williams' different understanding of piety and Christian community alienated him from the rest of the Puritans. Without the same understanding of fundamental concepts in their society, harmony between Williams and the Puritans became unrealistic. Because Williams and the Puritans were unable to agree upon the role of government and religion, Williams created his own community where everyone agreed that government and religion should remain separate.

Throughout *The Bloody Tenent*, Williams's use of violent language and imagery aims to evoke a passionate response from his readers. Williams compares the wretchedness of religious oppression to rape, murder, and alienation. Separated, Truth and Peace mourn their estrangement, describing the evil and cruel nature of the world. By personifying Truth and Peace, Williams describes the miserable and tortured lives of two virtues that every individual deserves. Using violent language to portray the extent of Truth and Peace's afflicted condition, Williams depicts how unbearable life without religious freedom can be without a radical change. With language as his metaphorical sword, Williams dresses for battle and fights for religious freedom and his understanding of Christian community.

CHAPTER THREE

Washed and Made White: John Cotton's Puritan Response

While the Williams-Cotton debate took place in a very different ideological setting than modern society, remnants of their debate continually resurface. The unity of church and state may no longer be an issue in today's government, but the Williams-Cotton debate laid the foundation of modern religious and government controversy. Evident in the countless court cases concerning religion's role in government-funded settings, fragments of the Williams-Cotton debate live on today. History has taken Roger Williams's side seeing his argument of religious tolerance as prophetic. While history acknowledges John Cotton's argument, his writings are generally perceived as antagonistic. Despite Williams's clarity and absoluteness in his prescient message, Cotton felt equally as rooted in his traditional Puritan ideology. With the English government and the New England clergy to support his stance, Cotton attempted to refute Williams in his response to *The Bloody Tenent*, entitled *The Bloody Tenent, Washed, And made white in the blood of the Lambe: being discussed and discharged of blood-guiltinesse by just Defence*. In his rebuttal, Cotton explains his reasoning in supporting traditional Puritan ideology as well as discrediting Williams's argument. Intending to salvage his reputation as a "Teacher of the Church of Christ at Boston in New-England," Cotton disputes each of Williams's points made in *The Bloody Tenent*. Adopting a similar format with dialogue between two characters, Discusser and Defender, Cotton defends and justifies himself throughout *The Bloody Tenent, Washed, and made white in the blood of the*

Lambe. While similar in format to Williams's tract, Cotton's dialogue with its sensible message and logical tone serves mainly as a defense rather than a declaration of beliefs. Despite their differences, like Williams, Cotton worked to develop his ideological understanding into a version of Christian community.

Establishing the purpose of *The Bloody Tenent, Washed, and made white in the bloud of the Lambe* in the title page, Cotton states that he addresses "the great questions of this present time, How farre Liberty of Conscience ought to be given to those that truly feare God," and "how farre restrained to turbulent and pestilent persons that not only raze the foundation of Godliness but disturb the Civil Peace where they live." Explicitly written as a retaliation of Williams's *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution*, Cotton defends himself while simultaneously condemning Williams for his "separatist" and rebellious nature. Obvious even from the title page, Cotton and Williams' beliefs concerning religious toleration could not have been more different. Essentially accusing Williams of disturbing "the Civil Peace where they live," Cotton invalidates Williams's radical ideology by reducing them to nothing more than a nuisance. Cotton's denunciatory tone also suggests he does not "truly feare God." Questioning Williams's relationship with God, Cotton returns Williams's previous letter with a logical yet angry rebuttal. Corresponding with Williams from jail, Cotton states that he was "not willing to deny him any office of Christian love and gave him his poore judgment in a private letter" (Cotton 2). Publishing their correspondence without Cotton's knowledge, Williams broadcasted Cotton's beliefs concerning religious tolerance and belied each of Cotton's assertions. Believing that his correspondence with Williams would remain private, Cotton took great offence in Williams publishing his letters, perceiving it as "punishment with

open penance” and “exposure to open flame” (Cotton 2).

In the first chapter of Cotton’s *The Bloudy Tenent, Washed*, Cotton explains how his and Williams’s correspondence came to be published without his knowledge.

Offended, Cotton’s irritation and disbelief color his response to Williams’s *The Bloudy Tenent*, stating:

The letter, and so the error contained in it, (if it was an error) it was private, and so private, that I know no man that hath a copy of it, not my selfe who penned it (for ought I could find) but himself onely, if I did offend him by the writing of such an error to him (though by himselfe intreated to expresse my judgment) let him remember, he pleadeth for libertie of conscience: I wrote my conscience and the truth of God according to my conscience in the sight of God. Why should he punish me with open penance, and expose me “as much as in him lieth, before the world) to open shame, as a man of bloud, for the liberty of my conscience? (1)

Because this correspondence between Williams and himself was written “about a dozen years agoe,” Cotton had not the slightest idea that he should be concerned that their correspondence might be published (Cotton 1). Cotton stated that he “was not willing to deny him [Williams] any office of Christian love” and responded to Williams request “touching persecution for conscience sake: and intreated my [Cotton’s] judgment of it for the satisfaction of his friend (1-2). While the content of Williams and Cotton’s private correspondence remained private for “a dozen years,” one can only assume that Cotton offended Williams, resulting in the publishing of their letters. This action that Williams found so contemptible manifested itself in the form of his banishment from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. A well-respected member of the clergy, John Cotton was thought to have played a major role in Williams’s banishment. Not taking so harsh a punishment lightly, Williams returned to England and published his and Cotton’s private correspondence. Igniting a fiery battle, Williams intended to signify the horrendous

nature of religious oppression at Cotton's expense without his permission.

While Williams felt that the unity of church and state violated each individual's right to worship God in the way he or she deemed necessary, Cotton thought that allowing his community the choice of religious worship increased their chances of burning in hell. Convinced that his religion was the only one accepted by Christ, Cotton felt that the separation of church and state encouraged his flock to stray from the calling God ordained them to follow. Strictly applying the Bible to all of his writings, Cotton acted on his beliefs. Cotton was asked by the Massachusetts Bay Colony to "make a draught of laws agreeable to the word of God" (Wolosky 104). Applying the Bible to all of his writings, especially his *Judicials*, Cotton wrote "something like a constitution in the form of a Bible commentary" using "compilations of passages mainly from Deuteronomy, Exodus, and Leviticus (Wolosky 105). Believing in God's power and justice as ardently as Williams, Cotton advocated the unity of church and state out of his devotion and loyalty to his community. Convinced that a unified government and church would best help his flock's relationship with Christ, Cotton followed his understanding of the Bible in his debate with Williams.

Cotton felt that he, as well as Williams, was simply expressing his own "liberty of conscience" privately in his letters (Cotton 2). Irritated that Williams had not shown him the respect his private correspondence deserved, Cotton details his purpose in writing *The Bloody Tenent* in his first chapter. Automatically defensive after Williams publicly broadcasted his letters without his knowledge, Cotton took a belittling tone throughout *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*. Constantly reminding the reader that Williams was "a Prisoner in Newgate" at the time of their correspondence, Cotton intends to expose

Williams's uncouth act. Always referring to Williams in a derogatory fashion, Cotton maintains a guarded and spiteful tone. Incessantly referring to Williams as "the prisoner," Cotton establishes himself as a reliable source, casting doubt on Williams. While Williams was a prisoner, Cotton was "a teacher of the Church of Christ at Boston in New England" (Cotton, Title Page). As well as establishing himself as the more honorable correspondent of the two, Cotton uses the government to support his argument as well. Stating that he explores "how farre the Magistrate may proceed in duties of the first Table," as well as "that all Magistrates ought to study the word and will of God, they may frame their Government according to it," Cotton admits that he believes in the unity of the Church and the Government. With this admittance, Cotton then earned a lifelong enemy in Williams. Considering nothing more deplorable or prejudicial, Williams founded his ideology on the separation of Church and State. Believing that religious persecution would continue to ruin the lives of countless people until the two were separated, Williams served time in prison and was banished from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for voicing his opinions on the matter so aggressively. With such an angry and aggressive adversary, Cotton had no choice but to publicly respond to Williams's *The Bloody Tenent*. In hopes of defending his beliefs, Cotton published *The Bloody Tenent, Washed* to clear his name and his reputation throughout New England and England.

Adopting a similar format to that Williams used in *The Bloody Tenent*, Cotton also uses a responsive dialogue between two characters as the vehicle of his rebuttal. The Discussor presents Williams's argument and the Defender rebuts the Defender's arguments. Unlike *The Bloody Tenent*, Cotton's dialogue is not conversational and the Discussor and Defender are in no way connected to one another. While Truth and Peace

were estranged lovers longing to be reunited and lamented the violent imagery and language of religious persecution through their dialogue, the Discusser and the Defender have a logically based relationship. Throughout each chapter, the Discusser presents Williams' argument, or refutation of Cotton, within the first paragraph. Generally, the rest of the chapter explains the Defender or Cotton's opinion. While this format stays fairly consistent throughout *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, it varies in some chapters. For example, each of the chapters before chapter eight employ the general format previously mentioned. However, chapter eight introduces the reader to the Discusser and the Defender's first debate. Discussing and Defending "holding forth error in a way of Arrogancy in matters of Religion," the Defender condemns those who repress "both the sinfull matter held forth (things erroneous and unlawful) and the sinfull manner of holding them forth, which such Arrogance and impestousnesse, as tendeth to the disturbance of Civill Peace" (Cotton 16). Specifically referring to Williams in this passage, Cotton perceives him to be an audacious radical, overly confident in his beliefs. Considering that Williams published his and Cotton's private correspondence, Cotton seems justified in his perception of Williams.

During *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, Cotton uses his two characters, the Discusser and the Defender, to illustrate the various differences between Williams's beliefs and his own. Throughout the text, the Discusser presents Williams's argument. By entitling Williams's character "the Discusser," Cotton implies that Williams's argument is nothing more than a discussion and contains very little validity. As seen throughout the work, The Discusser constantly asks the Defender for clarification on various religious practices. Not only does Williams's incessant need for elucidation suggest that his ignorance

hinders him from understanding religious practices and government policies, it also denotes Cotton's superior knowledge of practices related to church and state. Writing himself as the superior authority in religious and government matters, Cotton continues to assure the reader of his intelligence, rationale, and liability. Capturing Williams's pathos laden rhetoric throughout his text, Cotton further establishes himself as the more credible source. Cotton logically argues his treatise, providing Scriptural evidence and government support. In sharp contrast, Williams employs graphic imagery to arouse a need for justice within his reader. Dependent on an emotional reaction, Williams's argument becomes passionate rather than logical. Throughout his work, Cotton continually reiterates differences between himself and Williams. Emphasizing Williams's flaws by repeatedly recognizing his own integrity, Cotton works to ruin Williams's reputation through contrast with his own accolades.

Throughout Williams's *The Bloody Tenent* and Cotton's *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, the contrast between passionate and logical language plays a vital role in communicating each writer's message to their audience. While Williams employed violent language, creating poignant imagery, it evoked a reaction within the reader. Serving his purpose, Williams's use of violent imagery forced his reader and or audience to make a decision concerning religious tolerance. On the other hand, Cotton employs explanatory and defensive language. As Richard Gummere states, "Cotton, politically in sympathy with the government authorities, and spokesmen for the same, was primarily theological in his publications. Williams, in opposition as a founder of a new experiment, employed a wider variety of testimony" (175). Combining the government's voice with his own, Cotton simply reiterated his opinion, which happened to be the same as the

government's. While Cotton took a traditional stance supported by the government and the church, Williams embraced a more aggressive and confrontational stance in his correspondence. While Williams's use of violent and powerful language evoke action within his reader, Cotton's explanatory language merely defends his side of the argument. Difficult to read because of the constant rape and murder imagery surrounding religious persecution, Williams made Cotton's task in responding to *The Bloody Tenent* with a work equally as heinous in its use of language and imagery, insanely difficult. Despite his lackluster use of language throughout *The Bloody Tenent Washed*, Cotton uses his response to Williams's *The Bloody Tenent* to explain and justify himself and his beliefs.

Praised "for leaving off "rhetorical ornaments" and preaching plain repentance, criticizing those who "prefer the Muses before Moses, and taste Plato more than Paul, and relish the Orator of Athens (Demosthenes) far above the Preacher of the cross," Cotton bluntly stated his point. Unlike Williams who used pathos to appeal to his reader, Cotton stated his stance without the "rhetorical ornaments" (Gummere 176). Commended for his simplistic writing and preaching style, Cotton had no interest in winning people to his cause. He was simply defending himself and the government. Williams, on the other hand, used pathos to evoke passion in his reader in hopes of gaining followers for his cause of religious toleration. While Cotton and Williams had very different goals in publishing their respective works, both men engaged in a debate of epic proportions concerning religious tolerance and practices. In responding to Williams's *The Bloody Tenent*, Cotton also published a declaration of his beliefs concerning the government and religious practices. While Cotton wrote *The Bloody Tenent, Washed* to defend himself and the government from Williams's accusations and "how farre liberty of Conscience

ought to be given to those that truly feare God,” Cotton broadcasted his own opinions concerning church and state, this time with out Williams’s help (Cotton Title Page).

At the beginning of *The Bloudy Tenent, Washed*, Cotton summarizes his entire argument. By reading the title page, Cotton’s reader has an outline, as well as a basic understanding of what he intends to discuss throughout his work. Williams begins *The Bloudy Tenent* with a list of several theses, all of which he addresses throughout his work. Despite his logical writing style, faint glimmers of passion arise in *The Bloudy Tenent, Washed*, but Cotton’s argument does not depend on it. Throughout his work, Cotton refers to Williams as “the prisoner.” While reading *The Bloudy Tenent, Washed*, especially the sections written by the Defender, the reader senses Cotton’s irritation, presumably directed towards Williams. While it is unclear whether Cotton’s passion lies in his hatred for Williams or in his stance concerning religious practices and the government, his appeal to emotion over logic occasionally manifests itself throughout *The Bloudy Tenent, Washed*.

Throughout all Puritanical writing, the juxtaposition of passionate and logical language played a vital role in the reception of the work. Perry Miller states “Rhetoric, was a tool with which Puritans could plane off the colors of speech from Scriptural utterances, leaving the smooth white surface of ‘that one entire and naturall sense’ (50). Throughout her essay, Delamotte commends Cotton for making Scripture understandable and applicable for his congregation. By teaching “his listeners to understand the tropes of scripture without having to translate them into another form of discourse,” Cotton essentially prepared himself for his debate with Williams (Delamotte 51). Approaching Williams’s argument and accusations in a similar way, Cotton disregards Williams’s

pathos-filled writing, isolating his main argument. Cotton's approach to scripture explains his logical approach in choosing the two characters, Discusser and Defender, throughout *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*. While one character, the Discusser, presents Williams's accusations of Cotton from *The Bloody Tenent*, the other character, the Defender, espouses Cotton's beliefs. Both of the characters are strictly present in the *The Bloody Tenent, Washed* for the purposes of presenting and defending Cotton's argument. Throughout the text, the Discusser seems confused, needing guidance and clarification. At the beginning of Chapter thirty-eight, the Discusser states:

But first by the way, I desire to aske, what the Answer meaneth by his unconverted Christian in Creete? An unconverted Christian is as much as an unconverted convert, untamed tamed, unholy holy, Christians Antichristians. (Cotton 77)

Through this confusing dialogue, Cotton asserts that Williams is unable to support his arguments with factual evidence. Implying that Williams' logic relies solely on pathos, Cotton removes all "emotional ornaments" from his writings. Refusing to saddle his writing with convoluted yet poetic phrases and imagery, Cotton says exactly what he means without the help of ornate language or literary devices, making style an ethical choice. Supporting his claims with factual evidence and government backing, Cotton emphasizes the importance of logically defending and proving one's argument.

While the Discusser and the Defender serve as Cotton's agents of logic throughout *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, Truth and Peace are the vehicles of Williams's pathos laden message of religious tolerance. Unlike Cotton's characters who logically debate and question to prove their points, Williams's characters are estranged lovers yearning to be together. By creating such distressed characters, Williams essentially forces a passionate response from his readers. Despite Truth and Peace's serious

discussion about religious tolerance, it is easy to get lost in Williams's pathos-driven dialogue. Williams makes very harsh and violent accusations against Cotton throughout *The Bloody Tenent*, equating religious oppression to rape and murder. While Williams makes very valid points throughout *The Bloody Tenent*, he does not rely on logos to support his argument. Relying heavily on pathos and his own interpretation of the Bible, Williams uses Truth and Peace to deliver the heinous nature of religious oppression. Williams uses violent language throughout his work to sharply contrast the relationship between Truth and Peace as well as the difference between religious tolerance and religious oppression.

Both Williams's *The Bloody Tenent* and Cotton's *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, centrally address the issue of the unity of church and state. Claiming that the amalgamation of the government and a national religion was religiously intolerant, Williams purposefully declared support such a union was hypocritical. On the other hand, Cotton fully supported the joining of church and state. In his essay, Jesper Rosenmeir explores the origins of the church and state debate between Cotton and Williams.

Searching for the source of conflict, Rosenmeir states:

An examination of all Cotton's and Williams's writings reveals that from their disagreement about the meaning of Christ's incarnation in the last ages before the imminent kingdom of Christ on earth develops the debate about the separation of church and state and about liberty of conscience. Viewed in this light, Cotton's polemical writings are not uneasy compromises with his conscience but entirely consistent with the most central tenet of his faith, held since he began preaching at St. Botolph's in 1612, which is that spirit and flesh must not be separated while men wait for the second coming. As Christ was made flesh, so every Christian, Cotton believed, must long to become the visible embodiment of the Holy Spirit, even in the time before Christ's return. (8)

While the subject of Williams and Cotton's debate is common knowledge, Cotton never explicitly states why he feels so passionately about the unity of church and state.

Williams on the other hand, repeatedly explains why he finds this coupling so offensive: forcing people to practice the same religion is oppressive and does more harm than good. While Cotton feels equally as passionate about this joining, he never clearly states his own reasons for feeling this way. Simply defending himself and the government's stance on the subject, Cotton as well as the rest of the New England officials saw Williams's radical stance on the subject as a threat to the unity of their community. However, Cotton's rooted beliefs in the unity of body and spirit provides great insight into his belief that separation of church and state is essentially sacrilegious.

Discussing the unity of church and state in chapter fifty of *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, Williams and Cotton use scripture to provide evidence for each of their arguments. Stating "But the Magistrates were called Gods in the Old Testament, not in the New. Now under Christ all nations are merely Civill, without any such typically holy respect upon them as was upon Israel as a national church," the Defender analyzes the Discusser's argument (Cotton 105). Refuting the Discusser's treatise, the Defender states "It is written in the New Testament, the Kingdomes of the world are become the Kingdomes of the Lord, and of Christ, Rev. 17.15" (Cotton 105). Logically interpreting the argument, Cotton stands by the literal meaning of the text. While Williams interprets the Scripture more figuratively and in a broader scope, Cotton maintains a narrow focus, hardly moving past what is literally stated in the Bible. Consistent throughout all of their writings, correspondence, and interpretations of Biblical scriptures, both men remain firmly rooted in their own ideologies. While Cotton follows a strictly logical pattern of thinking, Williams embraces the pathos of religious Scripture and uses the passion it evokes in the reader in his own text. Because both of these men thought so differently,

compromise was not an option. Clinging to logic, Cotton could not understand Williams's pathos-charged writing nor did he want to. Convinced that he was emulating Christ in his behavior, Williams refused to cooperate with Cotton. Consumed with freeing the Massachusetts Bay Colony from religious persecution, Williams would not renounce his "separatist" beliefs in order to rejoin his community. While their inability to compromise resulted in Williams's banishment and the publishing of his and Cotton's correspondence, the Williams-Cotton debate shed light on a monumental and fundamental issue in early Puritan society and the development of Christian community.

Engaging in a debate derived from different understanding of Scriptures, both Cotton and Williams consulted the Bible while developing their stances concerning religious ideology. Cotton's "kept closely" to the symbolic language of his texts, teaching his congregation to "look through them but without having to 'move away' from sign to thing signified" (Delamotte 51). Consistent with the logical progression of *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, Cotton coherently interprets the "the symbolic language" of scriptures, using those deductions to explain his stances on various religious issues in his debate with Williams. While Williams also uses his interpretations of scriptures to advance his argument, he focused primarily on those emotionally charged. Although Cotton argues from a more logical perspective, Williams argues from an emotionally appealing perspective, consistent with his emotionally driven writing in *The Bloody Tenent*.

As seen repeatedly throughout the text, Cotton constructs himself as the sole proprietor of truth throughout *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*. Not only does Cotton repeatedly insult Williams by referring to him as "the Prisoner," but Cotton also distorts his intentions through the format of his text. By establishing himself as the Defender and

Williams as the Discusser, Cotton immediately creates doubt in the reader's ability to trust the Discusser. Assuming that Williams's representation throughout Cotton's work does nothing more than propitiate falsities, the reader instantly distrusts the Discusser. Further promoting Williams's ignorance, Cotton responds to the Discusser with a tone of childlike condescension. In the fifth chapter of Cotton's *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, the Discusser asks "Concerning the Ministry of the Word, if their New Ministry and ordination be true, then the former was false: And if false, then will it not follow according to his distinction, that fellowship with God was lost?" (Cotton 6). Responding with derision, Cotton states, "It needs no inquiry what worship I meane, whether Church and Minister, or Ministrations of the Word, Prayer, Seales &c. For I meane none of these, as they are dispenced in the Churches of England" (Cotton 7). Throughout this passage, as well as the rest of his work, Cotton addresses Williams much as one would address an ignorant child. Insulted by Williams's ignorance and insulted by his blatant objections to his ideology, Cotton writes Williams as a fool seeking to understand the truth and wisdom behind his interpretation of Scriptures and the relationship between the Church and State.

Even the title of Cotton's work, *The Bloody Tenent, Washed, And made white in the bloud of the Lambe: being discussed and discharged of bloud-guiltinesse by just Defence*, exudes condescension. Playing off of Williams's title *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience*, Cotton states that his work has been "discussed and discharged" from Williams's accusations. Setting the tone for the novel, Cotton's title epitomizes his patronization of Williams and *The Bloody Tenent*.

Depending on his derisive and condescending tone to encourage doubt within his readers, Cotton uses his directness to assure his readers of his reliability. While referring

to Williams as “the Prisoner” serves as insult to Williams, it also dashes his reputation, fortifying the confidence of Cotton’s readers and supporters. Throughout *The Bloody Tenent, Washed*, Cotton does not resort to emotionally riddled language to raise support for his cause. Rather than poetically express his frustrations with Williams, Cotton directly addresses the various sources of conflict between them. Using analytical reasoning and a progressive yet ridiculing format, Cotton’s argument concentrates specifically on Williams’s previous accusations in *The Bloody Tenent*. Unlike Williams who articulates his dissatisfaction by creating violent and graphic imagery, Cotton logically responds to each of Williams’s allegations in an orderly fashion. Preying on Williams’s passionate writing, Cotton expresses himself logically, resonating with his community. While Cotton’s religious and political views coincided with those of the government, his thought processes and ideology was better received in his community as well. Using Williams’s passion against him, Cotton uses his practice of logically interpreting Scriptures to refute Williams’s argument. Embracing his rationality, Cotton uses his frankness as well as his tone to ascertain his reader’s trust.

CHAPTER FOUR

Continuing the Debate: The Legacy of Williams and Cotton

After several written exchanges, Roger Williams and John Cotton's debate concerning church and state seemingly ends in Williams's *The Bloody Tenet yet more Bloody in Mr. Cotton's endeavor to wash it white*, which appeared in 1652. In his last refutation of Cotton's argument, Williams continues to ardently defend religious toleration. While in his other texts Williams makes his stance on religious toleration known from the beginning, he begins *The Bloody Tenet yet more Bloody in Mr. Cotton's endeavor to wash it white*, by bidding farewell to "Peace" and blatantly attacking Cotton's beliefs: "Dear Peace, our golden sand is out, we now must part with an holy kiss of heavenly peace and love; Mr. Cotton speaks and writes his conscience; yet the Father of Lights may please to show him that what he highly esteems as a tenent washed white in the Lamb's blood, is yet more black and abominable, in the most pure and jealous eye of God." While Williams's understanding of the relationship of church and state emerged the victor in the establishment of the United State's Constitution, specifically the first amendment, the debate has been resurrected in the courts and political conversation in the years since Williams's final letter. Seen in countless court cases concerning religion's role in any government institution, the relationship between church and state remains a complicated one. Issues such as public prayer or the practice of any religious education or rituals in schools today serves as a constant reminder of the vitally important debate between Williams and Cotton. Heatedly discussing the affiliation

between religion and the government, Williams and Cotton's debate acknowledged the discrepancies of a government coupled with a national religion. Since the creation of the Constitution and the Amendments, constant court cases addressing religion's involvement in any government setting provides further evidence of the complicated nature of the relationship between church and state.

Anne Hutchinson is the best known successor to Roger Williams in the case for religious tolerance, and her case shows us the severity in one's punishment for advocating a religion different than the one ordained by the government. Following Cotton to Massachusetts and Boston's first church, Anne Hutchinson was a devoted follower of John Cotton. As expected, Hutchinson became very involved "in the religious life of the women in her community" (Finkelman 537). Hutchinson's "advocacy of an uncompromising covenant of grace" and "her attacks on leading ministers" ultimately resulted in her arrest (Finkelman 537). While Hutchinson had the support of important members of her community at first, her allies slowly began to subside as charges against her steadily grew. Brought to trial in November of 1637, Hutchinson found herself abandoned by even her former supporter, John Cotton. Despite her lack of support, Anne Hutchinson faced the court and was eventually charged with

disturbing the peace of the Commonwealth and its churches; harboring and countenancing those of whom the magistrates had disapproved; holding private meetings in her home, which had been condemned by the General Assembly as "a thing not tolerable nor comely in the sight of God nor fitting for [her] sex"; and speaking words that were "prejudiced" to the churches and their ministers (Finkelman 537).

Hutchinson defended herself against the presiding judge and prosecutor, Governor John Winthrop. Said to have "successfully avoided conviction until she proclaimed her belief

in immediate revelation (a doctrine the Puritans held to be inimical to church and state),” Hutchinson held her own against the prosecution (Finkelman 537). While Hutchinson was sentenced to banishment, due to her pregnancy and the harsh New England winters, she stayed at the home of Pastor Joseph Weld where Weld, Cotton, and others attempted to persuade her of her mistakes. After receiving a trial before First Church, Hutchinson repented of her “errors,” but stated that her beliefs had not changed. Declaring her devotion to her unaltered religious beliefs, Hutchinson was “accused of lying and ordered as a “leper” to withdraw from the congregation” (Finkelman 538). Killed by Indians roughly five years after her banishment, Hutchinson “is most commonly seen as one of the first in American history to be persecuted for religious beliefs” (Finkelman 538). However, that seems to be the single source of agreement among scholars. Edmund Morgan was among the first to claim that Hutchinson’s trial was political rather than religious. No matter the type of trial, Hutchinson was among the first to suffer for her religious beliefs. Hutchinson’s trial was considered innovative in its foregrounding of questions of church-state relations in courts during her time and shortly thereafter.

Like Williams, Hutchinson remained dedicated to her idea of religious understanding. Suffering banishment with her family, and ultimately death, Hutchinson literally gave her life to the cause of religious toleration. Despite Williams’s progressive understanding of the separate roles of church and state, Cotton’s prominent role in his community left a significant impact. Knowledgeable and a prominent leader, John Cotton epitomized Puritan thought through his conservative understanding of the Bible. Equally important, Cotton’s devotion to his own Puritan ideology created a path for Williams’s radical understanding of the Bible and Christ’s plan for humanity. Williams and Cotton’s

devotion to their own interpretations of the role of church and state gave birth to a debate that is still discussed today. Evidence of the importance of this debate lies in the countless court cases concerning religion and government. While Anne Hutchinson was among the first to suffer from the unity of church and state, others have pursued legal action to ensure the first amendment is in no way violated and continues to uphold the separation of church and state.

In 1930, *Cochran v. Louisiana State Board of Education* appeared as a result of promises made during Huey P. Long's first term as governor of Louisiana. Before he was elected, Long promised to buy books for school children, in both public and private schools so that parents would no longer have to. Long's pledge became vitally important in Louisiana due to the large Catholic population and profuse private religious schools. Because neither the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment nor the Establishment Clause applied in Long's situation, his "proposal" did not cause any federal concern. Long attempted to circumnavigate this upset by claiming that "the schools were merely to be the distributors of the books" (Finkelman 93). Long's plan was thought to be "radical" for Louisiana and ensued lawsuits from two local school boards intending to keep the state from administering the books to the schools. Long's proposal was upheld and "the Court held that no appropriation was made to help any school, religious or other wise, and the purpose was for "the use of school children" (Finkelman 94). Invoking a tax on oil so the state could pay for the books, Standard Oil Company filed a suit claiming the tax commissioned to pay for the books as unconstitutional. In response, the Court stated that they could not answer this "political question," hardly resolving the issue at hand. *Cochran v. Louisiana State Board of Education* was said to be the "first crack" in the

wall of separation of church and state” (Finkelman 94). Modernizing the Williams-Cotton debate, this court case as well as countless others, illustrates the difficulty in clearly defining the relationship between church and state.

Again, in 1948, *McCullum v. Board of Education* provides further evidence of the complications involved in government and religious policies. Seen as a vital part of a child’s education, religious guidance was considered a non-negotiable subject by parents. “Released-time programs,” allowed children from public schools to attend religious classes at their schools at the discretion of their parents (Finkelman 305). Children were not instructed religiously while on school property, but were allowed to seek religious instruction that would not disrupt their public school education. Addressing the Supreme Court, Justice Hugo Black employed the First Amendment, ending Illinois school district’s program by deeming it violation of the establishment clause. *People of State of Illinois ex rel. McCollum v. Board of Education* served as the first time Supreme Court used the Establishment Clause to overstep state action. The case initially started as the result of a program that allowed religious teachings on public school property during the time the children’s presence was required. Starting this program in 1940 “when volunteers of Jewish, Catholic, and several Protestant faiths formed an association called the Champaign Council on Religious education” (Finkelman 305). Those who were members of the Champaign Council were allowed to teach religiously-based classes from fourth to ninth grade. Parents who signed a form allowed their children to participate in these religious classes for thirty-five to forty-five minutes a week. Those who did not engage in the religious classes continued their regular public school education. While those instructing the religious classes were not paid, they were supervised by the school’s

superintendent to ensure the ability of the instructor. As well as supervising the classes, the superintendent also determined if each religious class had enough students to substantiate its presence at the school. Much like other classes at the public school, these religious classes recorded the attendance of its students. The release-time program was first opposed by Vashti McCollum, an atheist and the parent of one of the children attending a public school in the local district. While denied by the Circuit Court of Champaign County and the Supreme Court of Illinois, McCollum's ruling was overturned in the U.S. Supreme Court, "holding that the school system's incorporation of religious instruction into the school day constituted an impermissible action under the Establishment Clause" (Finkelman 306). The *McCollum* case borrowed the argument of a previous court case, *Everson v. Board of Education* who quoted Thomas Jefferson stating "that the Establishment clause was intended to erect a "wall of separation between Church and State" (306). The *McCollum* case furthered this argument, claiming that conducting religious instruction on government funded property violated the Establishment Clause and the separation of church and state. While the court voiced their concerns about the intermingling between the schools and religious teachers, it failed to explain which elements of the Champaign program violated the Establishment Clause. Justice Felix Frankfurter further investigated the *McCollum* case, claiming that this "closely integrated program gave the religion classes an aura of authoritative acceptance, placing unconstitutional pressure on children to attend" (Finkelman 306). Continuing his investigation of the release time programs, Frankfurter pointed out that the inability to represent all religious denominations would make "some children feel alienated, a consequence that the Establishment Clause forbids in its policy of separation"

(Finkelman 306). In his final assessment of the case, Frankfurter explained that religion and government should remain separate so that no religious denomination was excluded. The significance of the *McCullum* case lies in its final result—“it was the first time the Court applied the Establishment Clause to invalidate state action” (Finkelman 307). Although they fervently discussed the outcome of the *McCullum* case, the court remained unable to clearly state which issues created “a break in the wall between church and state” (Finkelman 307).

As seen in both *Cochran v. Louisiana State Board of Education* and *McCullum v. Board of Education*, the relationship between church and state becomes progressively more complicated. In both of these cases, schools felt that the “separatism” of religion and government had been violated. Similarly, Williams contested Cotton’s amalgamated form of church and state, but was banished for it. While members of the community are no longer estranged for their beliefs or criticisms of the government, these lawsuits prove that the debate of church and state remains as important today as it was during Cotton and Williams’s time. Elements of, the Cotton-Williams debate continually resurfaces, creating the legacy of their argument.

Yet again, more evidence surrounding the debate of the role of Church and State surfaced in 1962 in *Engel v. Vitale*. Said to be “one of the most controversial decisions in American constitutional law,” *Engel* is known as the “Supreme Court’s seminal school prayer decision” (Finkelman 152). In *Engel v. Vitale*, the court stated that the State Board of Regents of New York breached the Establishment Cause by permitting children to perform a prayer written by the state. This mandated prayer stated, “Almighty God, we acknowledge our dependence upon Thee, and we beg Thy blessings upon us, our parents,

our teachers and our country” (Finkelman 152). This prayer was read at the beginning of each day in each class, under the supervision of a teacher, and endorsed by the board of regents. Five parents of children in these public schools first brought the lawsuit to the Supreme Court. These parents were “members of the Jewish faith, of the Society for Ethical Culture, of the Unitarian Church, and one nonbeliever” (Finkelman 152). The plaintiffs claimed that the daily recitation of the prayer opposed their religious practices, therefore encroaching on their free exercise rights. These five parents also argued that the state allowing prayer in public school breached the Establishment Clause. After bringing their case to the State Supreme Court, it was decided that the prayer was not any form of religious education was considered an acceptable practice. However, the trial court instructed the schools to establish that the pupils would in no way be forced to read the daily prayer. The State Supreme Court’s decision was also upheld by The Court of Appeals of New York, which stated that there was no violation of the Establishment Clause or free-exercise rights because no the prayer was not any form of religious instruction.

Taking their case to the Supreme Court, the parents of the school children relied heavily on *McCullum v. Board of Education*, “in which the court invalidated in-school “released-time” programs for their religious instruction” (Finkelman 152). The court answered the parents, stating that despite the prayer’s religious origins, state prayer had been accepted and was not religious instruction. The Supreme Court also responded by citing another court case, *Zorach v. Clauson*, which upheld the implementation of the released-time programs for religious guidance when the programs were conducted in places other than school property. However, when the Supreme Court voted on the *Engel*

case, the vote ended in a 6-to-1 decision claiming that the reading the prayer aloud was a violation of the Establishment Clause. In speaking for the Supreme Court's decision, Justice Hugo L. Black stated "the Establishment clause... is violated by the enactment of laws which establish an official religion whether those laws operate directly to coerce nonobserving individuals or not..." (Finkelman 153). As well as addressing those who potentially do not participate in religious practices, the Court also stated that the "neither the nondenominational character of the prayer nor the fact that students could be excused from the ceremony would allow this legislation to circumvent the restrictions of the Establishment Clause" (Finkelman 153). The Court addressed the state's endorsement of religious worship in public schools and decided that it was a violation of the constitution. The Court also claimed that "it is no part of the business of the government to compose official prayers for any group of American people to recite as a part of a religious program carried on by the government" (Finkelman 153). Justice Potter Stewart cast the lone opposing vote in the Supreme Court's decision, stating that the Court's inability to prove that students were forced to participate in the prayer proved the misuse of the Establishment Clause. Potter remained convinced that the daily recitation of prayer in no way amounted to an endorsed state religion. The *Engel* case provided an overwhelming commotion in the public. Because the *Engel* case cause such controversy, Justice Tom C. Clark agreed to address the public in order to elucidate the Court's decision. Justice Clark first stated that "the prayer, which was recited daily by students in a public school, had been composed by the state" (Finkelman 153). Next he claimed that the "legislation required that a state-employed teacher be present during the recitation" (Finkelman 153). Thirdly, the Justice pointed out that "the prayer was recited aloud in unison, not

individually” (Finkelman 153). Finally, Justice Clark addressed the “public’s misconception of the reach of the *Engel* holding,” stating that the Court “did *not* expressly prohibit silent meditation or all forms of prayer in public schools” (Finkelman 153). While Justice Clark did his best to expound upon the Court’s decision in the *Engel* case, it still serves a source of confusion and resistance. The public’s primary concern in the ruling of the *Engel* case resided in its claim that any state-endorsed prayer would be deemed a violation of the Establishment Clause. While the court made its decision in the *Engel* case based off their understanding of the Establishment Clause, “the school prayer controversy has not abated” (Finkelman 153). Evidence of the school prayer debate continuously resurfaces in various court cases as well as those who attempt to circumnavigate the ruling of the *Engel* case. While multiple attempts to repeal the decision made in *Engel v. Vitale* have been proposed, none of them have been successful.

The 1963 court case *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp* continues the ongoing debate concerning religion’s role in government. Employing much of the logic used in *Engel v. Vitale*, only a year earlier, *Schempp* argued that it was a violation of the Establishment Clause to set aside time during the school day for religious instruction. A media sensation, the *Schempp* case thrived off the previous attention surrounding the *Engel* case. While *Schempp* was presented as one case, two separate cases composed it. The first involved prominent atheist Madalyn Murray who (alongside her son) disputed a law in Maryland mandating the reading of a chapter from the Bible or the Lord’s Prayer. The second component of the case involved the Schempps, a Unitarian family, that contested the reading of ten Bible verses at the start of every school day. Due to the ruling in the *Engel* case, it looked very likely that the Court would rule in

Schempp's favor, "unless they were prepared to overrule *Engel*—a most unlikely prospect" (437). Despite their unanimity in upholding the ruling on the *Engel* case, the justices formulated varying opinions in regards to "the school prayer issue" (Finkelman 437). The majority opinion was commissioned to Justice Tom Clark, who happened to be the Justice that addressed the public in hopes of reducing controversy in regards to the *Engel* case. Considered the most "conservative" Justice presiding in the Court, Clark established a "two part test" for cases such as *Schempp* and *Engel* involving "prayer and Bible reading" (Finkelman 437). Clark also explained that "in order to withstand the strictures of the Establishment Clause there must be a secular legislative purpose and a primary effect that neither advances nor inhibits religion" (Finkelman 437). Continuing his argument, Clark stated that both Bible readings and prayer were "religious exercises," therefore a direct violation of the Establishment Clause. Due to the Court's varying opinions, the record on the case surpassed one hundred pages. Justice Brennan, the most extensive opinion of the five, investigated and dissected the purpose and past of the Establishment Clause and claimed that the religious divergence in America seriously questioned the tradition of prayer in public schools. After stating his opinion, Justice Brennan repeatedly emphasized that the First Amendment's purpose was to create "neutrality" in religion rather than "hostility" (Finkelman 438). Furthering his explanation, Justice Brennan accentuated the "*particular* dangers to church and state which religious exercises in the public schools present" (Finkelman 438). While *Schempp* endured, the Court's verdict evoked much less commotion than *Engel*. Despite the various changes of Justices within the Supreme Court and various other concerns related to the religious debate in public schools, the debate concerning prayer during the school

day has not since been addressed.

The court case of *Lee v. Weisman* serves as a final example of the ongoing debate concerning the assigned roles of church and state. *Lee v. Weisman* addresses the Supreme Court's decision that the Establishment Clause had been violated when Rabbi Leslie Gutterman delivered an invocation for a Middle School Graduation Ceremony in Providence, Rhode Island. Invited by the school's principal, Robert E. Lee, Rabbi Gutterman was provided with a "two-page leaflet issued by the National Conference of Christians and Jews," which included "guidelines for public prayers at nonsectarian civic ceremonies" (Finkelman 271). Lee encouraged the rabbi to perform a nondenominational invocation and benediction. Daniel Weisman, the parent of one of the children graduating, attempted to ban the prayer after the school denied removing it from the ceremony. Rabbi Gutterman performed the prayers and benediction at the ceremony after U.S. District Judge Francis J. Boyle "denied preliminary injunctive relief" (Finkelman 271). Despite his initial denial of injunctive relief, Judge Boyle later claimed that the prayer was a violation of the Establishment Clause. The solicitor-general and those who encouraged the prayers, argued that the graduation prayer was different than a classroom prayer because they do not take place more than once a year, and the assembly is in no way forced to participate. Despite the solicitor-general's best efforts in persuading the Supreme Court's decision, the Court stated that standing or staying silent during the prayer was a form of active participation. Referencing *Engel v. Vitale* as well as *School District of Abington Township v. Schempp*, the Court ruled that Rabbi Gutterman's prayers did in fact breach the Establishment Clause. Considered to be a "transitional decision," the ruling in *Lee* maintained the Supreme Court's "separationist tradition...

largely because of the emergence of a moderate centrist block—Justices Kennedy, O'Connor, and Souter” (Finkelman 273).

Each of these court cases provide unique yet related instances of the complicated relationship between Church and State. Providing a long and controversial legacy from Williams and Cotton’s initial debate, these court cases prove their impact on American history. As seen in Anne Hutchinson’s case, fighting for one’s religious beliefs would become a topic of endless controversy and insurmountable difficulty to establish a “wall of separation” so mentioned by Thomas Jefferson. While the dynamic of court cases may have changed over the centuries, the significance of the Williams-Cotton debate concerning religious tolerance most certainly has not. The passionate defense of both sides of this debate rings true in each of these court cases. While those with seemingly radical perceptions of religious practices, or the lack thereof, can no longer be banished, the Supreme Court has been assigned an exceedingly difficult task in differentiating between violations and non-violations of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Throughout time, religion’s relationship with the government has been a difficult and controversial one. Seen through Williams’s passionate defense of religious tolerance and Cotton’s equally passionate defense of the traditional Puritan mindset, the relationship between church and state evokes the emergence of clashing beliefs that result in incessant spiritual warfare. Proven by Williams and Cotton’s pointed correspondence and Williams’s eventual banishment, only one understanding of the relationship between church and state can emerge the victor.

While Williams’s advocacy for religious tolerance eventually served as a model for democracy, Cotton’s representation of the traditional Puritan mindset cannot simply

be discarded. Williams's religious beliefs, radical for his time, highlighted the strict Puritanism of Cotton's argument. Similarly, Cotton's devotion to Puritan beliefs emphasized the intrusiveness of Williams's separatist perspective concerning the church and state. Because Cotton proved to be very intelligent and an influential member of his community, his prominence suggested reliability, stability, and informed religious guidance. In contrast, Williams's blatant attacks on Cotton's religious and political beliefs and the passionate rhetoric used throughout his writings conveyed Williams as a religious radical incapable of actively participating in a leadership position similar to Cotton's. Extremely intelligent and well equipped to battle Williams through violent, sanguine correspondence, Cotton unknowingly waged war against Williams by having a hand in his banishment.

Despite the obvious implications of their debate in today's society, Williams and Cotton's debate in their correspondence provides the perfect platform of clashing contemporary religious issues of their time. The first to argue over America's identity as a Christian nation, Williams and Cotton's respective ideologies played a vitally important role in the character of fledgling America. Cotton's advocacy of the unity of church and state establishes Christianity as a prominent component of America's identity, whereas Williams's proposal of religious toleration suggests a religiously neutral national identity. America's national identity also serves as one of the many contended facets of the debate between Williams and Cotton. The controversy between Williams and Cotton serves as a literal example of America's struggle to remain a nation separate and different from England. While America was literally a new born nation attempting to gain independence, Cotton's endorsement of the unity of church and state provided evidence

of England's presence in America. In contrast, Williams's subversive ideology of religious tolerance suggests a severance from England by creating a democracy. Williams and Cotton's opposing viewpoints provide an example of differing contemporary religious and political issues of their time as well as establishing a controversial legacy concerning the relationship between church and state, America's identity and her attempt to gain liberation from England. Again, the implications of the Williams-Cotton debate greatly outreach their lifetime. Creating the origins of America's identity crisis, the Williams-Cotton debate still endures today.

The relationship between religion and government continues to be a hotly contested issue in government today. Evident in the above mentioned court cases, many lawsuits have been heirs to the Williams-Cotton legacy. Providing examples of the importance and significance of their debate, Williams and Cotton were the first to acknowledge the confrontation between church and state in America. Williams's allegiance to pacifism and abiding by Christ's example of religious toleration played an immensely important role in the establishment of the Constitution as well as the Amendments. Equally sincere in his crusade for Puritanism, Cotton adhered to traditional Puritan religious and political beliefs rivaled Williams's passionate, gory rhetoric throughout their correspondence. Both men's dedication to their respective ideologies gave birth to the debate that still surfaces in modern day America: the relationship between Church and State. Playing a vital role in America's identity, Christian community, and her eventual liberation from England, the Williams-Cotton debate established the controversial paradigm of religion's place in government. As seen in countless court cases, the debate still wages on despite society's progression in

government and religious establishments. One of the most defining conversations in American history, the Williams-Cotton debate helped craft American national identity the need for American democracy and freedom from England. While both Williams and Cotton lie moldy in their graves, their legacies survive to tell the tale of their infamous debate concerning church and state.

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